

Developing New Identity for Historical Site of the Old City of Batavia, Indonesia

Conservation and Management of Historic Buildings

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Abstract

A historic building is one that has architectural, aesthetic, social and symbolical values [1]. It is a symbol of identity and a reflection of culture. Jakarta has an old town that was built during Dutch colonial time. A debate as to whether to preserve as found or restore with new structures has been a never ending issue. On one side, there is an urge to preserve historical buildings that symbolize the history of the country. On the other side, preserving without concerning users' need will be just another unsuccessful story for area. The aim of this research project is to seek for an alternative concept of conservation and revitalization for historical buildings and site in the old city of Batavia, concerning not only historical and cultural values but also users' needs. I will investigate issue of identity, representation, and users' need in preserving historical buildings in the old city of Batavia, Jakarta. These ideas, which relate to non-physical aspects in conservation, deal with meanings in architecture. I want to argue that the meaning of buildings in the old city of Batavia is distance for Indonesian because there is lack of local meanings and representation. In doing so, I will explore Indonesian historiography to give example of how selective the narration in the history of Indonesia. Historical narratives of the old city of Batavia are negotiations, rather than simple renditions of fact. Since there is almost no strong representation of local, any search of authenticity will always be nostalgic. I believe that in order to seek for an alternative concept for the buildings and site, it is better to consider what the users of this site want and need. I do a survey and an interview in order to experience the site from ground level. Then I analyze both physical and non-physical aspects of the site and the buildings to be able to address an alternative concept and identity.

Keywords: the old city of Batavia, representation, historical building, Indonesia

Steps of the Research



Introduction

Stadhuisplein – The Old City Square

Taman Fatahillah or *Stadhuisplein* is a large open field in front of City Hall, which now has turned into Museum of History of Jakarta or known as Fatahillah Museum [2]. *Stadhuisplein* itself was formerly a symbol of government authority VOC, a dutch trading company. Some people said that this City Hall resembles *Stadhuis* in Amsterdam with hardly any ornaments [3]. We can consider this to be appropriate because at that time, the Dutch built everything as close as possible with anything in the Netherlands.

"Life in the East Indies made gradually and in line by line. We saw 'the streets a long, very long', like the Netherlands, like Europe, whereas native settlements have no way of them. There was, in a sense. 'there are also geometric cities' in the East Indies. Geometry 'complete' a place in the East Indies. Problems cities, gradually, debated and resolved as a matter slordig straatmarketing, 'gift markers road rash'. There is an artificial stream on one side on the other hand, the other cities that do not regularly swept away or down ... " (from Rudolph Mrazek, *Engineer of Happy Land*, Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia, 2006. P. 95)



Figure (1) Batavia Town Hall
source: wikipedia

The old city of Batavia showed certain characteristics of an early ‘ideal planned’ city in the Dutch Indies. At the center of this old city stood *Stadhuis* or the old City Hall completed in 1712. At first, the City Hall building is taking care of all the problems that occurred in Batavia at the time, starting from the wedding, church, government administration, and jurisdiction court. Until 1913, it housed administration of the city with wings on both sides were used as prisons. Now it becomes the Museum of History of Jakarta that houses the furniture collection of the 17th and 18th centuries representing colonial time.

There are two other important buildings on the right and the left side of the square in front of the City Hall. In 1640, a Church (*Oud Hollandsche Kerk*) was built, and in 1866 the court split the council hall and built a separated building namely the *Raad van Justisie*. A church is now the Wayang Museum (Puppet Museum) and the supreme court is now the Museum of Fine Arts and Ceramics. Both were built in classical style. In this way, Old Batavia area is surrounded by three important symbols, the symbol of power, religious, and the symbol of justice. Behind the castle and the church, there were the offices area. It is not a surprise that this region of Old Batavia became the very important part back then.

A strategic position makes the old city of Batavia as one of the most visited locations. Based on the description of Johannes Rach, this field were the place of various communities activities, ranging from

just over or chatting with friends or acquaintances. The picture illustrated not only the Europeans who spent time there, also the Non-European. *Stadhuisplein* can possibly be said as the landmark of VOC for the local residents other than as a symbol of government authority. It is also quite in harmony with the routines of European citizens such as activities in public spaces.

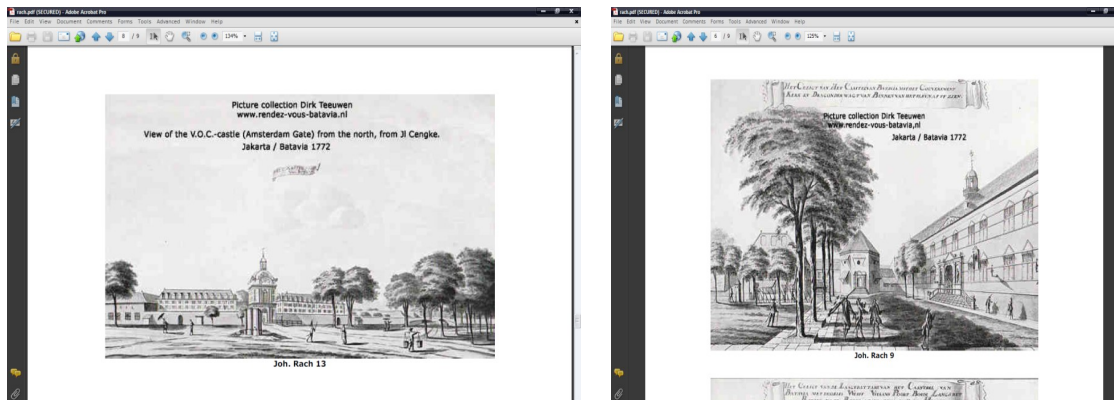


Figure 2. *Stadhuisplein* by Johannes Rach
Source: National Archives

The two images show that *Stadhuisplein* was a comfortable place for passing by with some shady trees around it. These images also showed us two different material used for a path in front of the church and *Stadhuis*, and a track across the field. The fountain in the middle of the field were visible from the circulation path made around the fountain and became an attraction for people.

History of Jakarta Museum/ Fatahillah Museum

Function	City hall, office, military headquarter, museum
Architecture	Closed Dutch style with influence from classic style
Architect	W.J. Van de Velde
Contractor	J.Kremmer
Class	A
Description	located in center of Batavia, about 500 m south from Sunda Kelapa Port. Repeating (the composition of big window in 5-4-5 ryhtim), monumental scale, very glamorous façade with portico (the other source said at the beginning it was built without portico) and cupola.



Figure 3. Fatahillah Museum or the City Hall

Wayang Museum

Function	Church, office, storehouse, cemetery, museum
Architecture	Closed Dutch style
Architect	Ed. Cuypers dan Hulswit, Ahmad Djuhara (new museum renovation design)
Class	A
Description	<p>The present building is the third generation. At first, it was build as a church, but after the big earthquake, Daendels demolished it and rebuilt it in 1912.</p> <p>From the beginning, Dutch government didn't know what they will do with this building, so they built it in the house form. According to Adolf Heuken, this building was built at that time with Dutch House style influenced by Neo-Renaissance, but never used as a house. Now, with a grant from Probo Sutejo, the museum is clustered with the next building. With this broadening, huge renovation is happening. To make the old museum appropriate with the new one, there will be accommodation in interior elements, such as floor, ceiling, staircase. The main gate location will be built in the new building.</p>

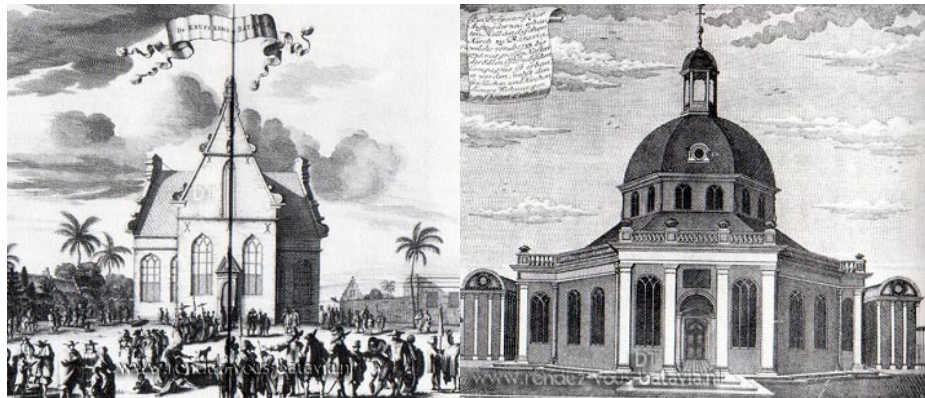


Figure 4. the old church in 1640, and the new church in 1736



Now

then

Figure 5. Wayang Museum

Above is the first building of Wayang Museum. The building in left was the Old Dutch Church and the building in right was the New Church. We can see that there are some changes in the building. The present facade is the result of building facade restoration in 1912. The last picture is an image of later conservation project funded by Probo Sutejo (clustered with the next building). The architect is Achmad Djuhara, who won a design competition to conserve this building.

Fine Art and Ceramics Museum

Function	Court city hall, Military headquarter, dormitory, office, museum
Architecture	classic style
Architect	Ir. W.H.F.H van Raders
Class	A



Figure 6. Fine Arts and Ceramics Museum

The large square in front of the City Hall also witnessed many events such as markets and feasts, as well as execution of justice. Just like the square public space in Europe, this place was designed as an honorific place celebrating the power of the ruler, and used to recall and strengthen their sovereign conduct. But not like in Europe, this public space never was extended to include places of public debate where the rational voice of the people could be heard. Since the context was colonial, the square became a showing off the colonial power. City Hall, Palace of Justice and church symbolized the most powerful image of the government. The significant meaning of the buildings was as a central, a symbol of authority, and order. The plan of the square that was meant to be the main crossing for people, with the water fountain in the middle of the square, now becomes isolated. The main streets outside the square are very busy while the square seems to be ignored and introvert. The only way to enjoy this place is from the square, after walking a few blocks through some old buildings representing colonial time. Some of the buildings around this square are in a very bad condition.

Timeline

History of Jakarta Museum		Wayang Museum		Fine Arts and Ceramic Museum	
1620-1926	Built and used as city hall or stadhuis by Jan Pieterszoon Coen				
1648	Building level was ascended about 56 cms	1640-1732	Built and used as Old Dutch Church or Oude Hollandsche Kerk		
1649	5 dungeon was built as a prison				
1665	Widening the building by adding each of building wing one room (west wing and east wing)				
1707-1710	The newer and bigger building was built. This is the third face of city hall, but it wasn't too different with the first and second.				
1743	drinking water network was build and later appeared as fountain in the middle of stadhuisplein.	1736-1808	Renovated and renamed as New Dutch Church or De Nieuwe Hollandsche Kerk		
		1808	Big earthquake happened and destroy the building so Daendels, the general governor of VOC decided to demolish all the building	1866-1870	Build as City Court. It used to be in city hall, but transferred into this building
		1912 -1934	Rebuilt & bought by Geo Wehry & Co in 1875 as trading office & storehouse		
1925-1942	Used as o the official West Java government office	1936- 1939	Bought by Bataviasche Genooschap van Kusten en Wetenschappen (Science, Art, and Cultural Center for Dutch government in Batavia, 1778)	war time	Used as a dormitory and supplies building
		1939	Used as Old Batavia Museum		
1942-1945	Used as Japanese Logistic Collector (during WWII). The other source said that this building used as Japanese headquarter (Kempetai Dai Nippon).			1942-1945	Used as military headquarter of Dutch
1952	Used as the headquarter of Military West Jakarta				
		1957	was given to Cultural Institution		
		1962	was given to Ministry of Education & Culture		
1968	was given to the government of DKI Jakarta province	1968	was given to the government of Jakarta	1967-1973	Used as the mayor of West Java official office
1972	a project to reuse and revitalize "stadhuisplein"				
1973	Renamed as Taman Fatahillah				
1974	Officially launched as History of Jakarta Museum				
		1974		1974	Used as the official office of Jakarta History and Museum agency
		1975	Officially launced as Wayang Museum		
				1976	Used as Fine Art Center
				1977	collection was added with ceramic
				1986	Inaugurated as Fine Arts & Ceramics Museum
		2005	Clustered together with a building next to Museum Wayang (ex Berita Buana office), courtesy of Mr. Probo Sutejo		

New Plan for the Old City Square

Since a long time ago, *stadhuisplein* or Fatahillah Square has been a symbol of power, a commercial place and a place of meeting. The name of Fatahillah is taken from the Prince of Demak Kingdom who is well-known a founder of Jakarta. From the name, we can infer that the government also appreciate the place as part of national history. In 1972, the first governor of Jakarta, Ali Sadikin set the Old City area, which covered 846 hectares, as cultural conservation area. In 1992, the Governor Soerjadi Soedirdja proceeded the Act of Heritage Building Protection and Inventory 117 of historical buildings to preserved the site and buildings in the old city of Batavia. After that, the Governor Sutiyoso launched the revitalization of the Old City of Jakarta in 2006

The program started within the core area of Old City square, which is at Pintu Besar Utara Street and Taman Fatahillah. The government has replaced concrete road with stone, all the way until Pos Kota, Lada, and Kali Besar streets. The governor inaugurated this place in September 2007. In addition to the program, the Governor also made a new regulation (Regulation No. 34 of 2006) regarding acquisition, planning, structuring extension of the old city of 846 hectares. Previously, the old town area of Jakarta is only 139 hectares. Now it reaches the Archives Building in the South, Kampung Luar Batang in the North, Kampung Bandan in the East, and Five Bridges in the West.

This program includes changing materials for the roads in the old city, and rearranging the circulation into one way street. All the existing concrete road was replaced by 8-12 inches stones that not only can absorb water but also reflecting the original condition without eliminating the pattern of paving. The program also includes installation of lighting around the old city in order to remove the impression of 'haunted'. The government also plans to have tramway that goes around the old city of Batavia.



Note:
 Blue Line: general road
 Green Line: Semi-pedestrian road
 Figure 7. Access to the site

From the picture above, there is a separate flow for automobile and the pedestrian. There is only limited access for automobile; people can only walk to enjoy this site. The one way

street is an effort to overcome traffic jam and provide better access for pedestrian. Since there is lack of parking area, people park their vehicles off the street and on pedestrian pathways. This condition is very disturbing, especially on holidays when the number of visitors increased sharply .



Figure 8 Parking on the Site

During weekdays, many people cross the Fatahillah square. In the afternoon, we can also see some school children hang out in this area. This location is already known as a landmark for people and becomes a meeting point. During weekends, some photography communities visit this place regularly and have some photo sessions. They want to capture different colonial atmosphere of this place. This area is also famous as a background for pre-wedding photography. Some free lance and professionals photographers even offer wedding photograph packages here. Many people also have a tour in the old city, including to museums. There is also some groups of people use Fatahillah square as a regular meeting place. Some bikers, especially who love *ontel* bike, have a regular gathering here (*ontel* bicycle was a name for bicycle used by many Dutch people).

Before the conservation program in 2006, the condition of paving stones were bad because they were often crushed by vehicles. Then the government apply some barriers to avoid vehicles to enter the square. Unfortunately, some of motorcycle drivers often ignore these barriers to make a short cut to reach other side of the square. The protected area only covers the square, not the bigger surrounding areas. In Figure, light green indicates area that is often used as a parking space, while dark green indicates protected area.



Figure 9. Location of Street Vendors

Ever since the revitalization program in 2006, the number of visitors increased by 50%. For example, visitor of Wayang Museum reaches 28,089 in 2006, 41,508 people in 2007, and 80,883 in 2008. From this data, we can conclude that improvement in access and image of the place have attracted local and international tourists.

There is still some problems related to the old city of Batavia:

1. Lack of supporting facilities like toilets, trash can, and guard.



Figure 10. Paving block, trash thrown by visitors, and some damages in the site

2. Since there are many visitors, this place certainly attract attention of local residents who want to take advantage or sell goods.

There is an increasing number of street vendors. (see figure 8, the pink color indicates the location of street vendors. They sell food and beverages, souvenirs. They also offer services such as photography, and tours. Food carts are parked under the tree, and the sellers provide a bench for their customer. Their office hours are from morning until the late afternoon), There is even somebody who sell accessories for old-style bicycles known as *sepeda ontel*. This kind of bicycle is used during colonial and early independent times. This person usually exhibit *sepeda ontel* in front of the puppet museum and post office (see red-colored area in Figure 8).



Figure 11. People like to gather in shaded area.

After the conservation plan in 2006, there has been some changes as a result of activities of users, or related to the idea of place-making. The area still has colonial atmosphere, but since there are more variety of activities, the image of old, spooky area has changed. For example, many photographers have used this area as their favorite place. They have clients who expect colonial atmosphere in their pictures. There is also However, some people want this place to have new functions and images. The food vendor hope for a more fixed place for them. The man who sells *ontel* bicycle has painted his bicycles with bright colors like red, pink, and blue to attract attention. In a way, this reduces the feeling of old colonial time. with more people visiting this area, there should be new study and adjustment to what has been done.

Some of the buildings around Taman Fatahillah are also unique old colonial buildings. Most of these buildings are neglected by the owner, only few of them are being used as commercial places. One of this building is now a clothing store. Even though the store is not suitable to the image of the old city, I hope this is a good sign that this area will be back in use again.

4. A comfort is still one of a major problem here. Hot weather and lack of shady places in the square make visitors feel uncomfortable. This place is a place to walk rather than to relax. There is a tree quite in the middle of the square as the only place to sit. Some visitors express their hope to have comfortable seat shady space even only for crossing the square.

5. Since there are more people commercialize this area, and not enough security guards available in this area, some people take advantages of this. They ask for money as maintenance and security fee they claimed to have provided. They have their own territory. In order to take a picture and make movies, people have to pay them some money. This activity will discourage people to invest to this area.

Ideas to restore or to conserve this area have become a major issue. At the side where the Wayang Museum stood, there are some other old buildings like old and unused shop houses in very poor conditions. This square remains lethargic even though it is surrounded by major commercial areas. Some argue that the strict conservation policy has prevent investor to change the functions of the buildings.

Discussions

There had never been a synthesis between “modern” western-oriented structure and techniques and eastern art forms before the 20th century. One of Dutch architect P.A.J. Moojen who lived in the Dutch East Indies from 1903, criticized Indonesian Classicism to be ‘insipid imitations of a soulless Neo-Hellenism, bad copies of sad models, mute, white witnesses to a century of tastelessness and an inability to create’ [4]. From this text we understand about colonial architecture always refers to classical style. The indigenous form and architecture would never be an answer.

Indonesia has tropical and humid climate that requires a building to have sunshade and adjacent to the roof, in order to avoid sun and rain come to a building. Most of the architecture of the buildings in the old city of Batavia square does not reflect these needs. It seems that Dutch built a building that reflected their identity in the form of classical architecture, rather than adapting to the local condition. There is no representation of local architecture and culture in buildings. The only thing we can understand is Dutch representation of power.

So what are the meanings of architecture of these buildings? Should there be more representation of local?

Before I discuss this, I do believe that the old city of Batavia must be examined in the context both of colonial preoccupations and the rhetoric of the independent Indonesia nation-state. As Ronald Inden has implied, present knowledge and representation of the people and institutions are basically based upon the West’s imagination about its own rationality [5]. Then ever since Indonesia’s independence day, the government tried to give more appropriate representation of Indonesian in fighting the Dutch, so there is a shifting of main actor and interest in the history of Indonesia. We can understand example of this through Indonesian historiography.

I want to discuss Indonesian historiography to problematize the idea “Indonesians representing themselves in history. By doing so, I would like to show that we cannot escape

the use of concepts and selection of topics of fundamental decolonization. Hopefully, this realization can give a broader understanding for conservation concepts.

The Dutch overseas exploration started in the 17th century. Hank Nordhold mentions that in Dutch colonial historiography such as Stapel's *Geschiedenis van Nederlandsch-Indie*, the Dutch became the main actors while the indigenous peoples were marginalized [6]. Even though there is another version of history that offered more space for a dynamic expression of different sociological formations, the West still became dominant thought. Present knowledge and history are still based upon Dutch's version.

Third world historians feel a need to refer to works in European the models of historian's enterprise are always at least culturally "European." Not only because they have western education, but also the colonial state archives become repositories of reliable facts in opposition to local historiographies that were classified under legends. After Indonesia's independence, the interest of history was driven by ideological issues. The origins of Indonesia was firmly framed in a Java centered Majapahit imperialism. Under Suharto's new Order (1966-1998) the only legitimate operator of a controlled process was the center of the state. Just like in previous colonial idea leaves very little room for Indonesian, the New Order approach also leaves very little room for ordinary people as meaningful historical actors. This simplifications cause many local knowledge to be lost, erases lots of autonomous local narratives. State institutions have tried to reduce complex realities into simplified ideas and clearly arranged categories in order to control society.

The point is that history demands a selective retelling of the past. Growing up in Jakarta, I experience this lesson firsthand with reference to old city of Batavia. I often heard lecture on this place as a glory of the past, and now we should maintain its site and buildings to reflect our histories. Every time I visited this place, I felt so distance. The building in the old city of Batavia belong to the classical style that Indonesia never had before. The buildings represent Dutch colonial power, and for so many years this area has been neglected for it does not fit to Java-centered government.

Should there be more representation of local or should we freeze the time or should we feel

only nostalgia and distance? What kind of representation this place should have?

Representations

The act of representation is carried out through texts. Roland Barthes mentions that texts are derived from other text to the extent that there is no 'originality' but only 'intertextuality'[8] For the old city of Jakarta, such textual representation can be seen from Dutch colonial power to negotiation of space, function, and representation.

Representation of the old city of Batavia can also be seen through intertextuality. The City Hall always become a central, nothing can compete its centrality. The old city of Batavia was undisputedly colonial. After independence, the dynamic between colonial and post colonial representation should enrich the historical site. The government or local authority of Jakarta should better realized the importance of representation. There is no strong decision yet as to give more local representation or to preserve the site as in colonial time. Even when the second one is chosen, there cannot be same situation as in colonial time, there is only nostalgia. Alternate identities must still be considered. Thus the story of the city is best understood as one of continuous remaking, which is only partly indebted to contemporary imaginations.

Colonized societies often also conceived of their world as divided between material outer and spiritual or inner domain [9]. The outer sphere was where the West dominated and it was here that it was to be emulated in terms of technology, economy, and administrative skills. By contrast, the inner domain was spiritual, defined by one's cultural identity. In the old city of Batavia, the other sphere consists of three buildings that symbolize West domination. While the inner domain or cultural identity of Indonesia can be seen in Wayang Museum. During colonial era, the Indonesian becomes 'the other' that never present physically in the square. After independence,

Anthony King said about tension between discursive representations of cities and their actual spatial and material forms architectural style are a layer of symbolic representation in the city [11]. Architecture may be both a vehicle for symbolic representations and a spatial

representation of social discourse. King concerns with the role that architecture can play in preserving our heritage, and the role that history can play in the generation of this new architecture needed to preserve our heritage [10]. An analysis of the design concepts is necessary to get relationship between the new architecture and the existing fabric. However, the philosophy of aesthetics must not be allowed to become metaphysical but has to be related and tested through the reality of actual use. Pragmatic requirements of space should be parallel with historical meaning. Architecture for conservation has to be both functional and historically appropriate.

Some indications shows that the old city of Batavia, especially in Fatahillah park, need new identity and representation of local people and present conditions. Formal activities that happen as a respond to users' need should be responded quickly. The increasing number of street vendors maybe a good sign that this place functions well again. Both functions and users should be considered as two things that will bring new atmosphere and ideas in conservation. The image of old and colonial time maybe the strongest representation, but there should be a possibility of changes. Perhaps there should be a representation of both colonial and post colonial representation to enrich the historical site. Far from any discussion of what to represent, any effort to accommodate changes should be done. New functions like bicycle community, movie makers, and pre-wedding photographer should enrich what people or users already think and feel about the old city of Batavia.

Conclusion

Architecture for conservation has to be both functional and historically appropriate. The place of historic building in the old city of Batavia has involved the hegemonic imaginations of both colonialism and modern-day postcolonialism. Ideas about representation in preserving historical buildings deal will meanings in architecture. Like Indonesian historiography, representation of colonial buildings is negotiations. The meaning of buildings in the old city of Batavia is distance for Indonesian because there is lack of local meanings. Perhaps showing a negotiation of time, functions, and representation may help to revitalize the old city of Batavia. Before applying any concept to conserve and revitalize this area, there should be more awareness of negotiation of representation and functions. This also includes

considering the need of the users of the place.

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